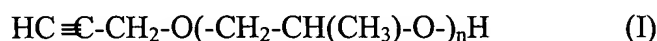


**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A process for pickling metallic surfaces ~~by comprising~~ treating the metallic surface with an acidic aqueous formulation which comprises at least one acid, a pickling inhibitor and optionally further additives, wherein the aqueous formulation comprises at least the following components:

- (a) from 60 to ~~99.99%~~ 99.97% by weight of a mixture of water and at least one acid,
- (b) from 0.01 to 2% by weight of at least one alkyne propoxylate of the formula



or



where the indices n and n' independently of one another are from 1 to 10, and

- (c) from ~~0~~ 0.01 to ~~38%~~ 20% by weight of at least one surface-active substance. ~~one or more additives and/or assistants.~~

Claim 2 (original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the indices n and n', independently of one another, are from 1 to 3.

Claim 3 (canceled)

Claim 4 (canceled)

Claim 5 (canceled)

Claim 6 (canceled)

Claim 7 (canceled)

Claim 8 (currently amended): The process according to claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~, wherein the pH of the composition is from 3 to 6.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The process according to claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 8~~, wherein the acid is at least one acid selected from the group consisting of hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, methanesulfonic acid and phosphoric acid.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The process according to claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 9~~, wherein the metallic surface is at least one surface selected from the group of consisting of the surface of iron, steel, zinc, brass or and aluminum.

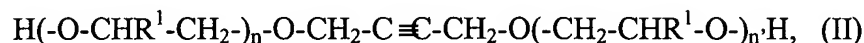
Claim 11 (currently amended): The process according to claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 10~~, wherein the surface is the surface of a strip metal.

Claim 12 (currently amended): A process for pickling metallic surfaces ~~by comprising~~ treating the metallic surface with an acidic aqueous formulation which comprises at least one acid, a pickling inhibitor and optionally further additives, wherein the aqueous formulation comprises at least the following components:

- (d) from 60 to 99.97% by weight of a mixture of water and at least one acid,
- (e) from 0.01 to 2% by weight of at least one alkyne alkoxylate of the formula



or



where the radicals  $\text{R}^1$  in each case independently of one another are H or methyl and the indices  $n$  and  $n'$ , independently of one another, are from 1 to 10,

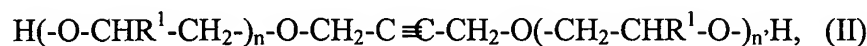
- (f) from 0.01 to 20% by weight of at least one surface-active substance, and
- (g) from 0.01 to 10% by weight of at least one water-soluble, at least bidentate, chelate-forming complexing agent comprising acidic groups and/or at least one water-soluble polymer comprising quaternized ammonium groups.

Claim 13 (original): An acidic, aqueous composition for pickling metallic surfaces, which comprises at least one acid, a pickling inhibitor and optionally further additives, wherein the aqueous formulation comprises at least the following components:

- (a) from 60 to 99.97% by weight of a mixture of water and at least one acid,
- (b) from 0.01 to 2% by weight of at least one alkyne alkoxylate of the formula



or



where the radicals  $\text{R}^1$  in each case independently of one another are H or methyl and the indices  $n$  and  $n'$ , independently of one another, are from 1 to 10,

- (c) from 0.01 to 20% by weight of at least one surface-active substance, and
- (d) from 0.01 to 10% by weight of at least one water-soluble, at least bidentate, chelate-forming complexing agent comprising acidic groups and/or at least one water-soluble polymer comprising quaternized ammonium groups.

Claim 14 (original): The composition according to claim 13, wherein the aqueous formulation has the following composition:

- (a) from 70 to 98.9% by weight of a mixture of water and at least one acid,
- (b) from 0.1 to 2% by weight of alkyne alkoxylates,
- (c) from 0.5 to 15% by weight of a surface-active substance, and
- (d) from 0.5 to 10% by weight of a chelate-forming complexing agent and/or a polymer com

Claim 15 (new): A process for pickling metallic surfaces comprising treating the metallic surface with an acidic aqueous formulation which comprises at least one acid, a pickling inhibitor and optionally further additives, wherein the aqueous formulation comprises at least the following components:

- (h) from 60 to 99.97% by weight of a mixture of water and at least one acid,
- (i) from 0.01 to 2% by weight of at least one alkyne propoxylate of the formula



or



where the indices  $n$  and  $n'$  independently of one another are from 1 to 10,

- (j) from 0.01 to 10% by weight of at least one water-soluble, at least bidentate, chelate-forming complexing agent comprising acidic groups and/or at least one water-soluble polymer comprising quaternized ammonium groups.

Claim 16 (new): The process according to claim 15, wherein the weight ratio of complexing agent to pickling inhibitor is from 5:1 to 1:10.

Claim 17 (new): The process according to claim 12, wherein the weight ratio of complexing agent to pickling inhibitor is from 5:1 to 1:10.

Claim 18 (new): The process according to claim 15, wherein the indices  $n$  and  $n'$ , independently of one another, are from 1 to 3.

Claim 19 (new): The process according to claim 12, wherein the indices  $n$  and  $n'$ , independently of one another, are from 1 to 3.

Claim 20 (new): The process according to claim 15, wherein the PH of the composition is from 3 to 6.